



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

DATE: June 18, 2020

TO: Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee (PYDAC)

FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff

SUBJECT: North Potomac Yard, Phase 1 Development – Design Excellence Matrix

Introduction

The applicant, CPYR Theater, LLC CPYR Shopping Center, LLC and Virginia Tech Foundation Inc, have submitted their revised architectural submissions for Phase 1 Development of North Potomac Yard. The team has developed a submission packet for PYDAC to show the architectural design of each building and begin to demonstrate compliance with the North Potomac Yard Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria Overlay. The applicant will also be discussing the ground floor uses and public realm elements at each of their presentations.

The PYDAC website contains a link to the following submission materials from the applicant team:

- Potomac Yard Design Excellence Matrix: A site-wide and building-by-building matrix identifying areas of conformity with the Design Excellence Standards; and
- A presentation by the applicant team with updated architectural elevations.

Staff has drafted this memorandum to supplement the applicant's submission and provided a column within the applicant's matrix with our agreement or suggested continued refinements for each building criteria.

Staff Memorandum:

The role of the Potomac Yard Design Advisory Committee is to review building designs for compliance with the area's design standards. For Phase 1 redevelopment of North Potomac Yard, the applicant team has opted to utilize the Design Excellence Standards. To facilitate the Committee's review of the buildings in line with the Design Excellence Standards, the applicant and staff has developed a matrix to provide a building-by-building comparison with the Design Excellence Prerequisites and Criteria.

The applicant team provided an updated Design Excellence Matrix which provides a building-by-building overview of each structure's compliance with the North Potomac Yard Design

Excellence Criteria and an overall Phase 1 compliance with the North Potomac Yard Design Excellence Prerequisites.

For each building the applicant team has broken down the Criteria into action items and provided a narrative response with their approach to achieving the Design Excellence Criteria. Staff has added a column to the table and provided feedback for each Criteria. In many cases, staff agrees with the applicant's narrative and approach to meet the criteria. However, there are instances where staff finds the building or site design requires additional refinement to ensure the architectural design achieves the level of quality and excellence prescribed in the Design Excellence Criteria. In those instances of disagreement between the staff and the applicant, we would ask for the committee's consideration and input.

Outstanding Areas of Refinement:

On the whole, staff finds many of the buildings are close to achieving full compliance with the Design Excellence Standards, however there are a few outstanding areas where staff finds additional refinement is needed across the site.

- Active Ground Floor Uses Along New Street A: Staff would encourage refinements to the ground floor uses to cluster active, pedestrian oriented uses along New Street A. The North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan identifies New Street A as a required retail street frontage. While the CDD added context that required retail could be broadened to active pedestrian uses, staff would encourage refinement of the ground floor designs to prioritize active uses.
 - Relocate building amenity areas away from New Street A as those uses are less likely to encourage interaction between members of the public and building ground floors.
 - Balance the amount of ground floor areas utilized for building lobbies at prominent intersections and portions of the streetscape. Staff recognizes the need for building lobby areas, but those should be balanced with other active uses.
- Unique Streetscape Design and Elements: While staff finds the initial streetscape design and proposed materials will provide a positive pedestrian experience, staff would encourage further development of the designs to create a sustainable and unique streetscape experience.
 - Identify sustainability features such as integrated stormwater, permeable pavers and other design elements that promote sustainability.
 - Propose unique design elements, such as materials or site furnishings which highlight a sustainable or innovative identity for the Innovation District. Are there unique application of materials or designs that can be utilized?
 - Develop a strong identity as the Innovation District. How do you know you're in the Innovation District when you're walking down New Street A or New Street B?
- Refinement of Service Areas: Staff would encourage further refinement of the design of the loading docks and service entry areas for most of the buildings to ensure those large

doors are integrated into the overall building design, especially given their location on very short east-west streets..

- Where feasible, narrow the entrances to the garage and loading areas to minimize the width.
 - Ensure the materials selected and design for the doors are high-quality materials and visually encourage the doors to recede from sight.
- Balanced and Unique Design of Publicly Accessible Open Spaces: An objective of the North Potomac Yard Small Area Plan was to create a network of unique open spaces across North Potomac Yard. By creating a range of spaces, each open space could meet varying needs of the community; each open space could be tailored to a different set of public needs. However, when viewing the proposed open spaces in Phase 1, staff would like to see greater differentiation in the design and programming of the spaces to understand the intent of each open space.
 - Further differentiate the intent of each open space through design features to support varied users.
 - Explore unique design features, site furniture, technological innovation or sustainable features to highlight the identity of the Innovation District. Current designs still feel generic and could be found in many communities.